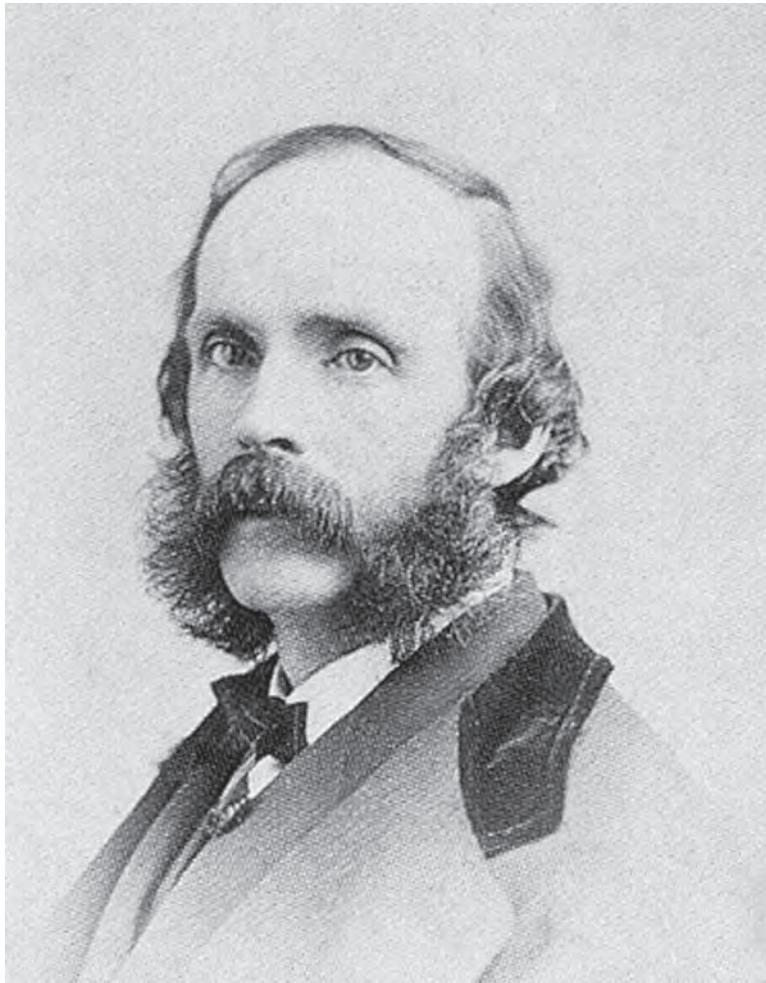


NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION, OLANA STATE HISTORIC SITE, TAUCONIC REGION



Frederic Edwin Church

# “The Art of the Landscape Gardener” Frederic Church at Olana

“The art of the landscape gardener has been employed,  
not so much to render Olana beautiful as to make it picturesque”

—*The Boston Sunday Herald*, September 7, 1890

*Robert M. Toole*

## The Setting

The story of Olana began in 1844 with the activities of artist Frederic Church (1826-1900), in a period when the Hudson River Valley was the epicenter of American Romanticism.

Romanticism was a broad international phenomenon that originated in Europe. Americans embraced the romantic impulse only after a long and decidedly unromantic period of colonial life on a true frontier. It was not until the frontier moved west that an artistic expression emerged that was quintessentially romantic. This expression had religious inspirations and was fired by the optimism of America's fledgling democracy, and the cultural innocence of its society, played out in wilderness settings that had few equals in Europe. By the early nineteenth century, it was influencing the arts and forming much of the cultural foundation of the young United States. In America, international Romanticism found a worthy culmination.

So, in 1844, the conservative artistic legacy of America's Colonial period was in the midst of a revolutionary change. Artist Thomas Cole, and others, had by then introduced Americans to romantic landscape painting. The region's literary sources for romantic thought, notably the works of Washington Irving and the other Knickerbockers, came even earlier. In architecture, the varied romantic styles, by then well established in England, appeared in the Hudson Valley in the decades before the 1840s. The early work of New York City-based Alexander Jackson Davis in the Gothic Revival (to evolve to the indigenous “Bracketed style”) can be seen from the 1830s. At Newburgh-on-Hudson, Andrew Jackson Downing's important writings on landscape gardening, including the romantic Picturesque style, began to appear in 1841. As will be shown, the Picturesque landscape design would find special resonance at Olana.

A.J. Downing's discussion of landscape gardening was taken directly from earlier English theorists and practitioners. This European background will be important to understanding Olana. (See the last section of this article.) Regarding landscape design, Downing was not so much an innovator as he was a transmitter of long-established design traditions. Still, the Hudson River Valley was distinctly American, and the "genius of the place"—celebrating local setting—was crucial to the romantic ideal, a point especially pertinent to landscape design. As such, America's romantic experience was unique, and its artistic expression home-grown.

In the decades before 1844, one of the Hudson Valley's important romantic venues was the village of Catskill, which served as a base for excursions into the Catskill Mountains, and to its close-at-hand escarpment—called the "Wall of Manitou"—celebrated by James Fenimore Cooper in *The Pioneers* (1823):

You know the Catskills, lad; for you must have seen them on your left [west], as you followed the river up from York, looking as blue as a piece of clear sky, and holding the clouds on their tops, as the smoke curls over the head of an Indian chief at the council fire.

The Catskills, Cooper maintained, were of spiritual importance, a place where America could find peace and from where "all creation" could be observed. From his first visit in 1825, Thomas Cole painted the mountain's lakes, hidden waterfalls, and wilderness vistas. He became enamored with the mountains, stayed to marry a local woman in 1836, and resided thereafter at her uncle's modest, Federal-era estate, Cedar Grove, at the edge of the village of Catskill.<sup>1</sup> In his "Essay on American Scenery" (1835), Cole described the area's landscape as "varied, undulating, and [with] exceedingly beautiful outlines—[the mountains] heave from the valley of the Hudson like the subsiding billows of the ocean after a storm." At Cedar Grove, Thomas Cole created many of the Hudson River School masterpieces that defined the artistic aspirations of a generation.

In the summer of 1844, eighteen-year-old Frederic Church entered this romantically touched and bucolic scene to study landscape painting with Cole. It was during this stay that Church first visited the site of his future home, on a hillside just across the Hudson from Cedar Grove, the property that would become Olana.

From their first correspondence, Church addressed Cole as "distinguished" and said he anticipated "the beautiful and romantic scenery about Catskill...[and] the greatest pleasure to accompany you in your rambles about the place observing nature in all her various appearances."<sup>2</sup> According to Charles Dudley Warner,

Church's friend and biographer, Cole and his Catskill home had the "profoundest influences...both artistically and in the molding of [Church's] general character." From this experience, Warner claimed that Church became an "interpreter of nature rather than a transcriber."<sup>3</sup> At Catskill, the "mere youth"<sup>4</sup> and his mentor roamed the hills in search of subject matter for their art, and Church absorbed the philosophical underpinnings that would ennoble his artistic genius.<sup>5</sup>

After study with Cole, Church moved to New York City, where he quickly established his reputation. In 1849, he was elected a full member of the National Academy of Design. In the 1840s and 1850s, he produced paintings that closely paralleled Cole's approach to landscape painting, including *Scene on the Catskill Creek, New York* (1847), *Morning over the Hudson Valley* (1848), *West Rock, New Haven* (1849), and *Mount Katahdin* (1853). In the late 1850s, Church completed what are today considered American masterpieces, the large exhibit pictures *Niagara* (1857), *Heart of the Andes* (1859), and *Twilight in the Wilderness* (1860). These works and others, all accomplished before Church was thirty-four years old, assured his fame.

In the spring of 1860, Frederic Church returned to a region of fond memories and artistic inspiration when he purchased a 126-acre farm across the Hudson from Cedar Grove as he prepared for his marriage that summer to Isabel Carnes.<sup>6</sup> By 1860, Thomas Cole had been dead for twelve years. His widow, Maria Cole; the three Cole children; and three of Maria's unmarried sisters still lived at their farm. Their friend Church stayed with the family as he concluded his real estate purchase.<sup>7</sup> Church then hired Cole's twenty-two-year-old son, Theodore, to help supervise the development of his country seat.<sup>8</sup>

In the decades that followed, employing his painterly background and the substantial income from his art, Frederic Church created Olana for his family, and produced a significant example of American landscape design. When substantially completed in about 1890 (when the newspaper quotation in the title of this article was published), the ornamental farm totaled 250 acres, double the size of the initial 1860 purchase. The designed landscape included the house grounds, extensive parkland, a lake, miles of pleasure drives, and a vibrant agricultural operation, achieved by an eminent artist, on an expansive scale, in a region of natural and pastoral beauty that was a focus of America's fleeting Romantic period.

Picturesque landscape gardening was to be the basis for the urban parks movement, initiated at New York City's Central Park (1858), and it was embedded in the American national park and conservation movements throughout the nineteenth century. Inspired by romantic sensibilities, these American

achievements in landscape design, preservation, and conservation celebrated the idealized harmony of settled and wilderness landscapes. In the hands of one of America's greatest landscape painters, they resulted in poetry on the land, the masterpiece of landscape gardening that is Olana.

## Olana's Site History

### Getting Started

Theodore Cole's diary and account books document early landscape design work at Olana in considerable detail. In his role as caretaker, young Cole first visited the property in February 1860 and noted that he intended "to see about getting out muck," an initial reference to excavation of Olana's future lake.<sup>9</sup> In April 1860, when Church was upriver, the two men again visited the farm and took what Cole called "quite a tramp over it."<sup>10</sup> Cole was to make regular trips to "Mr. Church's Place" throughout the 1860s.<sup>11</sup>

The farm purchased by Church had been established as a subsistent family farm in the late eighteenth century. After Church's purchase, a salaried farmer was retained to work the fields and occupy the original farmhouse. The Churches built a new, decorative "farmhouse" for themselves.<sup>12</sup> This was later called Cosy Cottage, and it was the Churches' *cottage ornée* at the farm for eleven years (Figure 4).<sup>13</sup> One visitor suggested that Cosy Cottage had been positioned to catch "the first and last glances of the sun,"<sup>14</sup> but its location amid the remodeled farm buildings confirmed the newlyweds' hands-on commitment to farm life. The Churches moved into Cosy Cottage early in the summer of 1861.<sup>15</sup>

During the first years, the emphasis was on getting the property's agricultural operations arranged in a way suited to Frederic Church's goals. New buildings were constructed and older structures were improved. Theodore Cole was actively involved managing the farm under Church's direction, often rowing a boat across the Hudson from Catskill on his regular visits. He kept accounts of expenses and farm income, and he interviewed and hired the salaried farmer and other workers.<sup>16</sup>

In the spring of 1861, Cole reported, "quite a number of trees were set out."<sup>17</sup> From the beginning, trees were planted in large numbers at Olana, so that three years after the above work, in the spring of 1864, the effort was tallied at "several thousand" trees already planted.<sup>18</sup> In addition to orchard trees, the ornamental plantings included native deciduous trees, such as sugar maples, oaks, and white birch, and native evergreens, among them pines, spruce, and especially hemlocks. Most of the deciduous trees were planted in a thirty-acre park located north and uphill from the lake excavation and Cosy Cottage. Lake dredging complemented

the planting, Church asserting, “my muck seems wonderfully adapted to trees and I give them liberal doses of it.”<sup>19</sup> Together, the future lake and adjacent parkland extended over the entire western half of the earlier family farm.

In 1861, the family enjoyed their first full summer season. The Churches’ first child, Herbert Edwin, was born that October. In these early years, some of the Churches’ friends seemed a bit startled at the couple’s headlong pursuit of rural life. One wondered, “can it be possible that you have abandoned the exquisite field of ideality in which you have reaped so many laurels, for the sure matter-of-fact one of the husbandman?”<sup>20</sup>

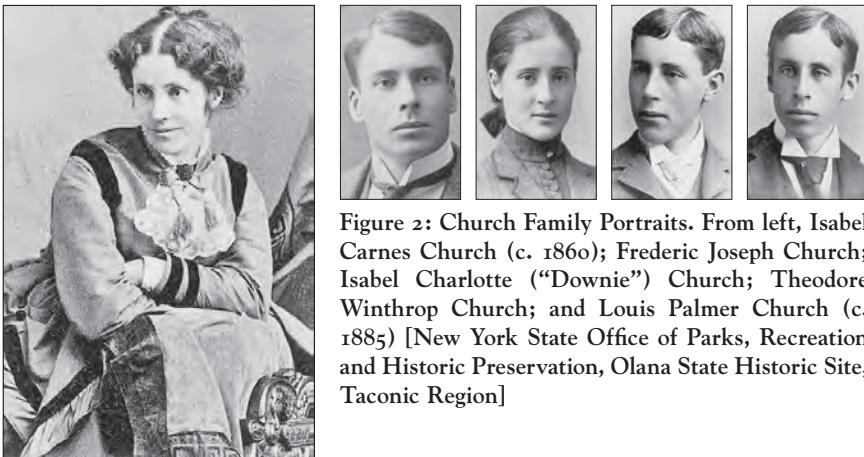
### Expanding the Landscape and Making a Plan

In 1864, Frederic Church began the complex series of land purchases that eventually encompassed the hill to the north, which would be the main house site. Church’s real estate transactions are fascinating for the care he exhibited in assembling the landscape entity that was to be Olana. His first purchase was approximately thirty acres of the steeply wooded escarpment lying to the west of the farm.<sup>21</sup> This property fronted on the public road (today’s Route 9G) that traced the base of the hill. With its steep topography, the land was not suited to agriculture. But Church knew this lot would be critical to his long-term vision. To his skeptical father (who was financing the purchase), Church argued that the lot was important in “securing fine openings for the views,” and as the site of “a suitable entrance and roadway into my place.”<sup>22</sup> With these comments, Church revealed his plans, saying the new lot might be sold in the future if another purchase was concluded:

I understand that the piece of woods at the North of my farm on the top on the hill can be had at the price asked 3 years ago \$2,000, with that and a strip say 200 feet wide on the eastern side of the lot north of it I should have a remarkably easy and superb roadway. This strip could not cost over \$500, probably less. Of course I would not buy one without the certainty of the other.<sup>23</sup>

The driveway Church envisioned here was the future North Road, constructed five years later as Olana’s primary, mile-long approach drive.

Before acquiring the hilltop and lands for this road, Church continued to concentrate his efforts on the farm, making further improvements to Cosy Cottage and other buildings. He built a driveway to the cottage, the first of Olana’s important carriage drives, which would evolve into an intricate, seven-mile-long system that largely defined the visual experience of moving through the Olana



**Figure 2:** Church Family Portraits. From left, Isabel Carnes Church (c. 1860); Frederic Joseph Church; Isabel Charlotte (“Downie”) Church; Theodore Winthrop Church; and Louis Palmer Church (c. 1885) [New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Olana State Historic Site, Taconic Region]

landscape. Church also planted more orchard trees and hundreds of additional parkland trees. The success of the park plantings was evident, with Theodore Cole reporting eight years after Church’s initial purchase, “you are occupying the uplands with trees.”<sup>24</sup> In addition to planting new trees, areas around the lake were simply allowed to grow up into second-growth vegetation, which was then selectively managed as woodland. Evergreens were planted in selected areas, an activity that seems to have coincided with Church’s winter stays on the property, when the trees became important landscape forms.

Initially, after spending the winter in New York City, Church visited the farm in the early spring and the family moved there on or about May 1. In mid-April 1864, Church wrote to his father that he had made three recent trips to the property, and “found everything in splendid progress.”<sup>25</sup> He described the scene:

The grass was fresh and green around the house [Cosy Cottage]. The strawberries had commenced throwing out new leaves. Vines and plants were well started peas have been up some little time—about five hundred trees have been planted and about as many more will be this spring... I found the air so invigorating there that I think it will be advantageous to take an early start [at moving up river].<sup>26</sup>

A month later, Church wrote his father again with this description:

The farm looks better than ever before... The peach pear and plum trees are a sight... The apple trees are just beginning to come out... We have a coop of 15 chickens by the house and he [Church’s son, Herbert] feeds them out of his hand—He is fascinated by the horses—I have a pair of pigeons.<sup>27</sup>

The Churches' second child, Emma Frances, was born in October 1864, but the following spring tragedy struck when both Herbert and Emma died of diphtheria in New York City. Devastated, the Churches spent the summer of 1865 in Jamaica. Cozy Cottage was rented.<sup>28</sup> While away, Church wrote to Theodore Cole, "I cannot think of the farm...without great longing."<sup>29</sup>

The Churches returned in the autumn of 1865, and, perhaps still seeking solitude, spent the winter at the farm for the first time.<sup>30</sup> Perhaps indicative of this withdrawal from society, the most notable project in this period was the construction of a large, self-sustaining studio located in the park-like grounds on the hillside above Cosy Cottage.<sup>31</sup> From this position, the Hudson River Valley and Catskill Mountains were visible to the west in a scene often sketched by Church.

After the interlude of mourning, a third child, Frederic Joseph Church, was born on September 30, 1866. There was a new baby at the cottage and spirits were restored.

The 1867 season was a busy one, with the Churches in residence at the farm from February until September, preparing for a long trip to Europe and the Middle East to commence in the autumn. In early spring, Church wrote, "my hands are busy in farm work[,] hauling muck, &c. It is delightful to see the farm alive again."<sup>32</sup> All summer, major renovations were made. Church built a "new barn"<sup>33</sup> and remodeled "my old barn."<sup>34</sup> An icehouse was re-roofed. At this point, Church claimed to have constructed "ten distinct buildings, and they haven't cost much either."<sup>35</sup> Included in this total were Cosy Cottage, the cottage outbuilding, the studio, the new barn, an extensively remodeled second barn and/or stable, a structure described as "a little building to accommodate a coachman,"<sup>36</sup> the re-roofed icehouse, and several other smaller sheds and specialty buildings.

The Churches took to country life with great enthusiasm. The interest was obvious when Frederic wrote, "Mrs. C. has a digging fit. She flits about with a trowel in one hand and juvenile plants in the other all day"<sup>37</sup> On another occasion, he wrote, "I superintend my own hot bed this season and if I plant my seed right side up I may expect to see them sprout in a day or two."<sup>38</sup> Despite the self-deprecating tone, the Churches were serious about the farm operations. The farm was repeatedly characterized as "magnificent" and served as an inspiration and subject of Church's art.<sup>39</sup>

Church's plans for a house at the top of the hill moved closer to reality later that year and in 1868, when two lots were acquired that Church claimed would "make my farm perfect."<sup>40</sup> First was the house site, eighteen acres of mature woodland purchased in October 1867.<sup>41</sup> Then, in 1868, the long narrow "strip" alluded to in Church's comments to his father in May 1864 was acquired.<sup>42</sup> This corridor,

about six acres, provided access to the north toward the city of Hudson, the region's largest commercial center. Church proclaimed it "all splendid woods"<sup>43</sup> and planned a new entrance road there. The land was subdivided from the western side of a neighboring farm that was being sold at this time. It was an intriguing purchase, with Church managing to buy only what he needed without disrupting the sale of the adjacent farm property. He had feared "that someone will buy it [i.e., the neighboring farm] who will refuse to sell such fine woods."<sup>44</sup> The transaction, which required a detailed survey, was finally completed in March 1868, after the Churches had gone abroad.<sup>45</sup>

## The Farm and the New House

The Churches traveled extensively in Europe and the Middle East for two years and did not return to the farm until the summer of 1869. In the 1870s, this trip inspired the Persian house design and the name Olana.<sup>46</sup>

In November 1868, a year after their departure, Theodore Cole wrote that "the farm I think will pay all expenses this year."<sup>47</sup> Three weeks later, Cole confirmed that for the first time there was "a balance in your favor on my book now."<sup>48</sup> The 1868 season was apparently a quiet, but efficient, one. With the Churches out of the country and special projects few, there was a businesslike approach. Notably, the weather was favorable for what Cole described as "a fine crop of peaches."<sup>49</sup> Later, Cole tabulated the farm expenses for 1868 at about \$1,000, offset by \$850 in fruit sales and \$150 from the sale of hay.<sup>50</sup> Of course, these totals did not include the capital outlay and operating costs that Church had incurred in farm improvements during the previous seven years, much less his family's livelihood,<sup>51</sup> but Church took great pride in his balanced farm books because they showed his seriousness of purpose in developing a farm property. He boasted to a friend that "the farm pays," and that this was "very soothing."<sup>52</sup> Another friend replied, quoting Church's letter:

I am glad to hear that "Your Farm" financially "runs itself." I am every year more and more satisfied with your judgment and wisdom in locating and possessing, and improving, a beautiful & advantageously situated country home—particularly as I know how strongly your taste & that of Isabel runs that way.<sup>53</sup>

In July 1869, the Churches happily returned to the property after nearly a two-year absence. Writing to a friend, Church enthused, "Here I am on my own farm—!...About an hour this side of Albany is the Center of the world—I own it."<sup>54</sup> Shortly after his return, Church added "two rooms"<sup>55</sup> to Cosy Cottage.<sup>56</sup> He

also added rooms to the old farmhouse; repaired other farm buildings,<sup>57</sup> including roofing an “Earth Cellar” (probably a root cellar); and built a new icehouse.<sup>58</sup> He asserted to a friend, “I have not been idle.”<sup>59</sup> Despite some subsequent changes in the staff, the farm had settled into a consistent and smooth-running operation. Church confirmed his direct involvement, soberly claiming to one friend that he was “a plain farmer,”<sup>60</sup> and to another that he had “a large farm to keep an eye on.”<sup>61</sup>

The hardscrabble farm Church had purchased ten years earlier had been profoundly altered.<sup>62</sup> Half the acres had been given over to the ornamental development of the lake, its woodland surroundings, and the parkland north of it, which was hayed but not grazed (in order to protect the trees). On the remaining farm acres, Church plowed about twenty acres—a small fraction of what had been plowed for subsistence agriculture in the years before Church’s purchase. A large drop in grain production accompanied the reduced plowing, but Church could afford to purchase grain, and, reflecting the concerns of a landscape gardener, he commented, “[A plowed field] spoils the beauty of the scene somewhat.”<sup>63</sup>

While rigorous farming was reduced, Church’s agriculture was more varied. He expanded the orchards and increased fruit production to include multiple varieties of cherries, pears, plums, peaches, and grapes; bush fruits, among them currants and raspberries; and strawberries. Church especially favored peaches. Theodore Cole boasted of “the best peach orchard in this part of the country.”<sup>64</sup>

Church’s kitchen garden, which included cutting flowers, reflected an interest in experimentation typical of gentlemen in this period. While the documentation is fragmentary, and crops would have varied from year to year, it seems that vegetable and flower seeds were acquired from several sources, with new varieties tried over the years.<sup>65</sup>

The total number of Church’s farm animals remained quite similar to the totals on the earlier family farm, with cows, horses, oxen, and a few beef cattle present in 1870, as had been the case earlier. One exception was pigs, with the earlier farmer’s herd of twenty reduced to two in 1870. The limited acreage for grazing put considerable pressure on pastureland, with Theodore Cole commenting that “your place needs sadly more fall pasture, we cannot of course use the front lots where the trees are [i.e., the park and lake surroundings].”<sup>66</sup> In 1870, with nine yearlings and only about ten acres available for grazing, Cole transported Church’s young beef cattle elsewhere, possibly to Cedar Grove, to graze for the season.<sup>67</sup>

There is little evidence of farm development after this period, indicating that the earlier work had largely completed the improvements Church intended to

make. Theodore Cole's role was reduced as Church's attention turned to the new house and a host of related, ornamental landscape improvements.

Even before the house was started, construction of what Church called the "North Road" began, laid out in the narrow corridor he had purchased two years earlier. On October 13, 1869, he wrote a friend, "I am constructing a long piece of road to the new House site."<sup>68</sup> Beginning at a distinctive splayed entryway, the North Road provided Olana with its primary approach from the city of Hudson. A family friend later said the mile-long North Road had been "invented by Mr. Church to make the place seem as large and remote as possible."<sup>69</sup> Numerous visitors commented on its dramatic character, as with this description in 1884:

The approach to Mr. Church's house on the northern side is along a winding and wooded road, which constitutes a considerable drive in itself. The hill is very precipitous here, and one looks down at times upon this road directly below him in an almost inaccessible gulf. The expenditure of road-building, and in otherwise bringing this huge, wild, steep mass of earth into suitable shape and condition has been immense, and could not have been accomplished by the Bohemian type of artist.<sup>70</sup>

The North Road led to the house, which, as planned, was "hardly seen till you are directly upon it."<sup>71</sup>

With the North Road completed, plans for house construction continued. During the winter of 1869-70, Church engaged Calvert Vaux, then one of America's foremost residential architects, to help with its design. The two men collaborated in preparing drawings. At the time, it was said that "Mr. Church designed the house in all its details, consulting with Mr. Vaux, the eminent architect."<sup>72</sup> While Vaux's role was essential, the Persian design style and the role of the house as a primary component in the designed landscape can be rightly attributed to Church. He was also responsible for the architectural details, such as windows, the entrance porch, *ombra* (as Church called it, an enclosed porch), piazza (veranda, or open porch), tower, pinnacles and roof projections, and a host of polychromatic decorative elements so important to the house as a landscape feature (Figure 5). More than a year after Vaux's first visit, Church wrote, "I am building a house and am principally my own Architect. I give directions all day and draw plans and working drawings all night."<sup>73</sup>

In the summer of 1871, a reporter described Church's estate while looking out from the Prospect Park House Hotel near Thomas Cole's home across the river in Catskill:

...upon the grandest of the hill-tops, a shiny platform shows the basement of the country house which Mr. Church is building at the summit of his extensive lands, and near the rustic lodge [i.e., Cosy Cottage] and studio he has many Summers rested, and where in secluded leisure several of his masterpieces have been finished.<sup>74</sup>

The construction had apparently generated considerable local interest related to the “liberal ground proportions...[where] one could get lost in its cellar.”<sup>75</sup> Of the landscape and its occupants, it was exclaimed:

How many hundred forest trees have been set out in its parks lately, and above all, how the artist’s beautiful wife has been seen riding across those red-veined hilltops upon a milk-white donkey, brought from the Orient, and—to the open mouthed admiration of the country folks—with her baby slung in the panier.<sup>76</sup>

The interest was confirmed in a newspaper account that called the new house “one of the prominent things now pointed out to the tourists and travellers” on the Hudson.<sup>77</sup>

The Churches stayed at Olana from the summer through the autumn of 1871. The family was expanded in July 1871 when a daughter, Isabel Charlotte (nicknamed “Downie”) was born. During the summer of 1872, house construction continued and was substantially completed late in the autumn, when the family moved into the second floor. Detailed work on the structure lasted for several more years, as did landscape improvements close to the house, with work there still being reported in 1880.<sup>78</sup>

In siting his house, Church selected a spot off the south summit of the hilltop so that there was higher ground and a wooded backdrop to frame and shelter the dwelling on the north. The house itself, as Church himself declared, was “a curiosity in Architecture.”<sup>79</sup> It was exotic—an artist’s house—described by one reporter as “a bright open-eyed house, presenting on the landscape side [i.e., south] an almost unbroken expanse of plate glass window... It is certainly no rectangle of dead walls.”<sup>80</sup> In the context of landscape gardening, to which Church ascribed, the house was a fitting garden feature. The landscape design close to the house included the formation of lawn terraces along the south facade. These terraces, graded out to level lawn on the east, dropped precipitously on the west. From the lawn terraces, and from the shady sitting spots on the ombra and piazza, the views south centered on the Hudson River; to the west, the Catskill escarpment rose sheer from rolling farmland. The view was said “to culminate the glories of the Hudson,”<sup>81</sup> a fame that endures today. Church described the panorama as linking

Olana to a wider world, “of mountains, rolling and savannah country, villages, forests and clearings. The noble River expands to a width of over two miles forming a lake-like sheet of water which is always dotted with steamers and other craft.”<sup>82</sup>

As a landscape feature, the house was now Olana’s primary focus. In turn, the house dictated a new landscape orientation for the property, with parkland, lake, wooded entry drives, and the dramatic viewpoints superseding the more modest agrarian associations of Cosy Cottage and its intimate farmstead.

## The Finished Lake and the South Entrance

With the main house completed, the Churches were habitually at Olana from spring through Christmas before retiring to New York City for the winter months. Later, winter trips to Mexico were a common occurrence. The Churches were getting older, and the siting of the house at the top of the hill separated them to some extent from the property’s agrarian roots. Olana’s farmer moved into Cosy Cottage. With farming orderly and routine, Frederic Church turned to further ornamental landscape improvements. A reporter visiting the property in about 1876 stated, “the grounds are not yet finished in all their details,”<sup>83</sup> confirming the situation before the active work that would continue into and occupy the 1880s. In these years, rheumatism restricted Church’s painterly efforts, but his affliction encouraged design in the outdoors. These were active years of landscape gardening at Olana. In 1879, a visitor noted, “The extensive grounds...are in a constant state of arrangement under the direct supervision of the artist.”<sup>84</sup>

There was a surge of activity on the lake before the spring of 1879. In December 1878, “Mr. George Herd” was hired to “work by the day for F.E. Church on the Pond at \$1 dollar [sic] per day.” He worked fourteen days between December 6, 1878, and January 6, 1879.<sup>85</sup> By May 1879, Church declared “the lake is overflowing, the birch canoe is ready”<sup>86</sup> (Figure 6). Earlier, Church had whimsically estimated the lake excavation as a “great quantity [of muck] not less than 5,000,000 loads.”<sup>87</sup>

The 1879 completion of the lake seems to have been related to Church’s purchase of a nine-acre lot at the southwest corner of the property.<sup>88</sup> This acreage included a 750-foot frontage on the public highway (today Route 9G) south of the earlier south entrance. The land acquired allowed Church to significantly improve the interest and drama of what he later called the “South Road.” This development began when he sited the new south entrance spectacularly beside the precipitous escarpment of Red Hill, which dominated the nine-acre lot. From the entrance, the new road skirted the cliff, with an open prospect to the west. The road then turned dramatically east through a low-wooded gap that brought

it to a point overlooking the south end of the newly completed lake. (Today, this is the vehicle entrance into Olana.) Church's new South Road then continued along the west side of the lake until it linked with an older drive that continued uphill on the west side of the park. In this way, Red Hill and the lake were made prominent features on the south route, including a final distant view toward the Catskills attained after turning away from the lake when exiting. Currently, this intended arrival and departure sequence is compromised by one-way traffic and non-historic road sections built in the 1960s.

## Completing the Landscape with a Flower Garden

In 1880, after experimenting with other ideas, Olana was adopted by the Churches as the property's name.<sup>89</sup> It was an appropriate moment for christening: with all the major land pieces in place, the original farm had evolved into a singular and expansive estate.

In this period, Isabel Church's mother, Emma Carnes, visited Olana often. Her diary from the 1880s describes a daily routine of relaxed recreation, including numerous carriage rides both within and outside Olana's boundaries, visiting with the farmer's wife and neighbors, touring the kitchen garden, and rowing on the lake.<sup>90</sup> In June 1884, Susan Hale, another family friend, made her first visit to Olana. Her letters reveal much about the property and life there in this period. Her impressions were ecstatic:

It is lovely here, real woodsy and wild<sup>91</sup>... The place is so large I can walk miles without going off of it. It is very pretty, great avenues of trees, a pond, nooks of shade and always the wide open view of the river and mountains.<sup>92</sup>

The family was at Olana throughout the 1884 season. By autumn, Church was reporting, "five men [are] building a road... I have made about 1-3/4 miles of road this season, opening new and beautiful views."<sup>93</sup> The Ridge Road (a loop to the north end of the hilltop) and a road around the lake, both built in 1884, account for much of this road construction. They had limited practicality but were undertaken as important components of the designed landscape. The lake road is documented as under way in July 1884, when Mrs. Carnes noted, "Mr. C. & Miss Hale marked out the road around the pond."<sup>94</sup> Ridge Road was one of Olana's most notable carriage drives. In August 1884, Emma Carnes recorded, "Mr. C. out all a.m. at his new road, north end of the place," and a few days later, "I walked from North View seat to where new road will join Bethune road."<sup>95</sup> In September, Mrs. Carnes noted, "Drove on new road as far as woods [i.e., the por-

tion of the road in the meadow], very rough now, but will be beautiful in views.”<sup>96</sup> As part of the construction, grazing in the north meadow was eliminated along the immediate edges of the Ridge Road, with a barbed wire fence erected out of sight on the slope below the new road.<sup>97</sup> This restriction on grazing meant that the ground fronting the Ridge Road could be planted and/or selectively returned to second-growth, which could then be managed as parkland, a suitable foreground for the splendid views. In October 1884, it was probably the Ridge Road that prompted Church’s enthusiastic comment on landscape gardening when he wrote a friend, “I can make more and better landscapes in this way than by tampering with canvas and paint in the Studio.”<sup>98</sup>

A year later, Church built another ornamental road, this time from the lake to the top of Crown Hill, a hillock in the southeast corner of Olana. In September, Emma Carnes reported, “Drove P.M. over the last new road which was meant for a surprise but has been suspected all along.”<sup>99</sup> The road began in the woods east of the lake, looped around a pocket of wooded wetland, then ascended into open agricultural fields before reaching the summit. On the hilltop, Church built a carriage turnaround. From this modest height, the view was panoramic, affording a new prospect of the house seen above the park and the impressive ensemble of Olana farm buildings fronted by the extensive kitchen garden in the middle distance. Off to the east was rolling farmland backed by the Taconic Hills.

As he had done on the Ridge Road, Church constructed a new field fence to restrict grazing close to the Crown Hill Road. This fence was located down-slope and out of sight from the turnaround. The positioning of this fence meant that about seventeen acres of former agricultural land had been dedicated to parkland fronting the new road. Church treated the area as he had others, allowing it to grow over time into second growth, which he then selectively thinned to compose the foreground vegetation and complement the more distant views. Hundreds of new trees were also planted, necessitating purchase of a hogshead mounted on a wagon for watering.<sup>100</sup> Other landscape work required selected removal of vegetation, and again Church confirmed his direct involvement, writing to a friend, “I am clearing up underbrush in places and this work requires close supervision.”<sup>101</sup> Olana was a work of landscape art in constant need of artistic management.

Church was not done with road building. In June 1886, he wrote, “I have laid out a new approach to the house, which I shall go at as soon as my men get through with the haying, now more than half done.”<sup>102</sup> This refers to the last major carriage drive built at Olana, a detour off the South Road near Church’s studio. The new drive brought carriages through the parkland studded with old birch trees on the slope immediately south of the house. It ended at the old drive-

way, at the same point where the house was first seen when traveling the earlier South Road, so that the final arrival at the house was not changed. The new road had the advantage of avoiding close contact with the service areas and stable yards north of the house, and, with the many views in the upper reaches of the park, it was a more ornamental and scenic approach.

This new approach seems to have prompted the installation of a flower garden as a feature seen from the road. The garden was a long border (about 145 feet long by nineteen feet wide) laid out on sloping ground facing south, sheltered against the stone retaining wall that traced the driveway above it. From the original plant lists and period photographs, the garden was a combination of flowering perennials and annuals in a mingled layout meant to be appreciated on foot or from the viewpoint on the nearby drives (Figure 7).<sup>103</sup> Critically, the flower garden could not be seen from the house, so the bold natural forms and uncluttered setting of the hilltop were left un-compromised.

While planned and first discussed in 1886, the new approach road and the flower garden were not completed for several years. As such, they are not shown on a “Plan of Olana” dated September 1886 (Figure 3). This plan, a vital historic document, was drawn by the Churches’ twenty-year-old son, Frederic Joseph.<sup>104</sup> It shows the landscape as it had been created over the previous quarter-century, including many aspects of the property not otherwise recorded, and providing the family’s names for Olana’s landscape features. For example, the plan reveals the presence of a “Summer House” located on a knoll directly south of the house, close to where the new approach road was being planned. Perhaps this is the “seat back of studio” mentioned in 1884,<sup>105</sup> but it is a structure that is not otherwise documented. Another landscape feature shown on the plan is the “North View,” a spot mentioned by Mrs. Carnes and shown located at the edge of the woods at the highest elevation of the north meadow. The 1886 “Plan of Olana” is also valuable for its depiction of the tree massing, confirming areas of open and wooded land, as well as the general layout of individual trees in the parkland south of the house and along the carriage drives.<sup>106</sup> Distinct surfaces, such as meadows, wetlands, water, woodland, and plowed ground, are differentiated by color. The kitchen garden (labeled “Garden” on the plan), as well as older hedgerows, are clearly indicated. The new fence lines installed below the Ridge Road and Crown Hill Road also appear.

Olana as illustrated in 1886, with the addition of the new approach road and flower garden, was now largely complete. In September 1890, as Frederic Church began to retire from active involvement in the day-to-day management of the property, a long and detailed article about Olana appeared in the *Boston Sunday*

*Herald.*<sup>107</sup> The reporter concluded that “the art of the landscape gardener has been employed, not so much to render Olana beautiful as to make it picturesque,” and noted that “the multitude of trees planted under Mr. Church’s direction a quarter of a century ago now give convincing evidence of his wise foresight.”

## Later History and Restoration Efforts

After 1891, Olana’s operations were entrusted to the Churches’ youngest son, Louis (1870-1943). Even with his involvement lessened, Frederic Church was clearly the arbiter of the landscape’s management throughout the 1890s, but very few notable changes seem to have been made.

In May 1899, Isabel Church died in New York City. After a sad summer at Olana, Frederic went to Mexico in December. In March 1900, he returned to New York City in poor health, and died there on April 7. An obituary spoke of “his magnificent country home at ‘Olana’ on the Hudson River, one of the most notable houses in the United States situated in a vast park beautified by the taste of the artist.”<sup>108</sup>

Louis Church [Figure 8] and his wife, Sally Good Church (1868-1964), inherited the property and became the stewards of Frederic Church’s legacy, providing a transition to the future. Even before 1900, landscape design fashion was shifting away from the picturesque aesthetic, but while Louis and Sally appreciated new ideas in horticulture and garden art, they kept Olana consistent with Frederic Church’s intentions. The property remained a farm for several decades, and the acreage was kept intact even after farming slowed during World War II, with some outbuildings removed in the 1950s. In all this period, no wholesale alterations to the site layout were made. The lake and park changed in subtle ways. Many of Church’s trees were felled by storms and never replanted. A more formal, architectonic garden (sometimes referred to as the “Italian Garden”) was added close to the house. The earlier flower garden along the carriage drive was abandoned. When Louis died in 1943, farming ended and site maintenance slackened. Notably, many open fields began to grow into woods.

When Sally Church died in 1964, the house and its contents were to be auctioned to settle her estate. A public campaign led to the preservation of the property and its invaluable collections. New York State took ownership in 1966. Today, with its lands generally intact and with a high level of design integrity remaining, the landscape is preserved as a state historic site. Enhanced by the support of an active friends group, The Olana Partnership, Olana will remain an important museum property dedicated to interpreting the life and work of Frederic Edwin Church and the romanticism of nineteenth-century America.

While protected, the Olana landscape is not adequately maintained and requires considerable restoration to bring back its nineteenth-century aesthetic. More than 60 acres of open fields are now second-growth woods, obliterating many of Frederic Church's intended views and scenic effects. Important view points are screened. The farm suffers from many restoration needs. Several farm buildings have been dismantled; others are in ruin. A public access road, installed by New York State in the late 1960s, deviates from Church's intended approach route, changing the visitors' experience while entering and exiting the property from the south. Church's featured North Road is abandoned. Many of the historic carriage drives are overgrown and require ongoing work on old drainage systems. Poison ivy runs rampant. Presented with a derelict landscape, few visitors are now willing to venture beyond the immediate house grounds.

In the early years of state operations, the landscape was considered of great importance and steps were taken to study it and restore some of its features, such as the flower garden, which was restored beginning in the early 1970s. A preliminary landscape assessment study was compiled in 1984, and this process culminated in 1996 with the completion of a "Historic Landscape Report."<sup>109</sup> Subsequently, a "Landscape Restoration Plan" (2002) has been prepared for the property. If implemented, it would return the landscape to its condition in Frederic Church's lifetime.

## Historical Background

The Olana landscape, a 250-acre ornamental farm, is a masterpiece of America's Romantic period, an expansive work of landscape gardening in the "Picturesque" design mode, as that term was defined and interpreted by America's notable landscape gardener of the mid-nineteenth century, Hudson Valley native Andrew Jackson Downing.<sup>110</sup>

To understand Picturesque landscape design as it engaged A.J. Downing and Frederic Church, we must appreciate the role of the landscape painter in the genesis of the English landscape garden, well before Church's rendition at Olana.<sup>111</sup> This history began when the works of seventeenth-century European landscape painters such as Claude Lorrain, Nicholas Poussin, and Salvator Rosa, among others, guided garden designers away from older geometric forms to incorporate a house, its driveways, plantings, and features into idyllic, pastoral stage sets where cultivated and natural landscapes mingled harmoniously. This was a new form of garden, a "landscape garden." The connection to landscape painting was clear. For Alexander Pope, in the early 1700s, landscape gardening was simply "like a landscape [painting] hung up."

From these beginnings, English landscape gardening led to the Picturesque movement of the 1790s, when a truly natural garden design style emerged. Through all this period, the landscape artist was considered, as one theorist put it, “the most proper designer” of a landscape garden.<sup>112</sup>

In the Hudson River Valley, the earliest design work in the English tradition of landscape gardening is discernable by 1800. At that time, some houses along the fashionable riverfront began to be set off in naturalized, park-like surroundings, located away from the farmstead, kitchen gardens, and stable complex. Still, these early efforts in American landscape gardening relied on classical features and a polished appearance.<sup>113</sup> Typically, there was a straight approach avenue with rows of evenly spaced trees leading to the classical, Federal-style house. Given the date, and given the setting, American landscape gardening was tentative and inordinately conservative, owing to recent settlement and the long-held preference that gardens appear in contrast to wild nature:

In embellishing on country seats in the United States, where the features of nature have as yet undergone but little change, an appearance of human labor and skills, and even of formality, produces the agreeable effect of variety, and awakens the pleasing ideas of progressive civilization and improvement.<sup>114</sup>

It wasn’t until the late 1820s and 1830s, after the wilderness receded, that the practice of landscape gardening in America began to embrace an appreciation for the picturesque aesthetic. With this change, strikingly natural-appearing landscape gardens materialized in the Hudson Valley, where the young republic was forging its cultural identity. Picturesque landscape design was a radical change, retaining none of the earlier emphasis on geometric layouts or overt artificiality. In the 1840s, these newer gardens were identified as “Picturesque” by the era’s notable landscape gardener, Andrew Jackson Downing.<sup>115</sup> It is Downing’s use of the term “Picturesque” (note the capitalization), and no other, that interests us in a discussion of Olana’s designed landscape.<sup>116</sup>

Downing’s “Picturesque” landscape gardening was closely related to its earlier expression in the 1790s, the English Picturesque movement. To help describe Picturesque design, Downing contrasted it with what he termed a “Beautiful,” or “Graceful,” approach to landscape gardening. Unlike the natural-appearing Picturesque, a “Beautiful” design was clearly artificial, with a polished, tidy, and unnatural appearance, often using exotic plants and formal placements. In addition, Downing included in the “Beautiful” approach more recent fashion from the English Regency period (dominant in England from the late 1700s to the 1830s),

intermixed with French influences popular in America in Downing's period. In assembling the amalgam he would call the "Beautiful," Downing also added Englishman J.C. Loudon's recently coined "Gardenesque" style, calling it "but another word for what we term the Graceful [i.e., Beautiful] school."<sup>117</sup> With this compilation, A.J. Downing defined "Beautiful" landscape gardening, and, in contrast, identified American Picturesque landscape design (Figure 9) as a separate "design mode" within the larger tradition of landscape gardening.

Downing, and other Americans, believed that picturesque themes had a special affinity in the wild yet pastoral landscape of the Hudson River Valley. It was there that Thomas Cole had found the "peculiar charms" of American scenery,<sup>118</sup> distinguished by "wildness [where] nature is still predominant."<sup>119</sup> Cole proclaimed that in America "all nature is new to art."<sup>120</sup> From this perspective, the region's physical character became renowned and was perceived as a model for landscape design. When Church studied with Cole in 1844, he experienced the picturesque aesthetic at its American source. Even earlier, Downing claimed that in the choice between using the "Beautiful" or "Picturesque" mode of landscape gardening, the Picturesque was "beginning to be preferred."<sup>121</sup> Into this regional context Frederic Church brought his exemplary artistic skills—and his wealth—to the art of landscape gardening. In 1860, the stage was set for the creation of the masterpiece that is Olana.

Church approached landscape design at Olana in a way parallel to his painterly art. His fidelity to nature is one important link to explore. As with other members of the Hudson River School, Church adhered to a near literal depiction of nature. Thomas Cole stated this principle succinctly, saying that "Imitation is the means through which the essential truths of nature are conveyed."<sup>122</sup> The idea, which culminated with the Pre-Raphaelite movement to which Frederic Church has been linked, was that nature had only to be truthfully seen in its entire minutia to be provocative.<sup>123</sup> In turn, fidelity to observed fact leads to greater truth. These aesthetic principles echoed the tenets of the Picturesque movement, which glorified nature and rural life by closely imitating natural and vernacular appearances in landscape gardening. This sense that nature and place—be it on canvas or in the landscape garden—must be approached literally and reverentially was a hallmark of the artists of the Hudson River School and of Picturesque landscape gardening as defined by Downing and his English sources.

Olana's landscape design is then a simple extension of Frederic Church's art into a third dimension. It is a design nearly indistinguishable from the Hudson Valley countryside—albeit an idealized countryside—of Church's lifetime. Evident is an adherence to the supremacy of irregular, natural forms and ever-changing

design effects described by Downing and his predecessors as the crux of the Picturesque approach. While Picturesque landscape gardening had an English background, its design principles insisted on finding the local “genius of the place,” thus insuring indigenous design motifs without direct reference to European models. In the Hudson River Valley, as nowhere else in America, the Picturesque was well suited to the character of the land and the independent romantic impulses of its people. This emphasis on the indigenous is unprecedented in American landscape design history. At Olana, this idea was taken to a grand and exquisite form where landscape garden, pastoral countryside, wild nature, farm fields, and the glorious display of a flower garden melded imperceptibly through the refined art of America’s foremost landscape painter.

Frederic Church’s involvement in creating one of the finest surviving examples of Picturesque landscape gardening in America is exceptionally fitting. “I can make more and better landscapes in this way than by tampering with canvas and paint in the Studio,” he declared.<sup>124</sup> It is a remark that confirms assertions made throughout the history of landscape gardening—early by Alexander Pope, reiterated during the Picturesque movement, and finally, for America, confirmed by A.J. Downing, who wrote: “Again and again has it been said, that Landscape Gardening and Painting are allied.”<sup>125</sup> Frederic Church’s role as the creator of Olana insures the property’s significance as one of the finest and most significant surviving designed landscapes in the United States.

*This article is dedicated to the memory of James A. Ryan, Olana’s distinguished site manager for two decades (1979-1999).*

## Endnotes

1. The term “Wall of Manitou” is reputed to be of Native American origin. See: Roland Van Zandt, *The Catskill Mountain House* (Hensonville, NY: Black Dome Press), 1991. For background on Thomas Cole (1801-1848), see: Elliot S. Vesell, “Introduction,” in Louis L. Noble, *The Life and Works of Thomas Cole* (1853), (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964). Louis Noble’s biography is enhanced by his personal friendship with both Thomas Cole and Frederic Church in the period 1844-45. For background on the Hudson River School, see: John P. O’Neill, ed., *American Paradise: The World of the Hudson River School* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987). For background on Frederic Edwin Church (1826-1900), see: Franklin Kelly, et al., *Frederic Edwin Church* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1989), pp. 12-75, and Gerald L. Carr, *In Search of the Promised Land: Paintings of Frederic Edwin Church* (New York: Berry-Hill Galleries, 2000). For Cedar Grove, see Robert M. Toole, “Cultural Landscape Report,” National Park Service and Thomas Cole National Historic Site, 2004.
2. Letter: Frederic Edwin Church (hereafter cited as FEC) to Thomas Cole, 5/20/1844 (Cole Papers, New York State Library, Albany, NY), Box 3, Folder 5.
3. Charles Dudley Warner, “An Unfinished Biography of the Artist [Frederic Church],” in Franklin Kelly, et al., *Frederic Edwin Church*, p. 183-85.
4. Noble, p. 272.

5. For discussions related to Cole's influence on Church, see: Kelly, 34-38 and Carr, 13, 45-47.
6. Columbia County Deeds (hereafter cited as CCD), Book 13, page 283 (dated 3/31/1860). All Columbia County Court records are housed at the county court house, Hudson, New York. The older farm had a hardscrabble history. Developed initially in 1794, there had been six owners prior to Church's purchase. Isabel Carnes (1838-1899) and Frederic Church were married on June 14, 1860, in Dayton, Ohio. Frederic Church's earlier knowledge of the site he purchased in 1860 is proven by a sketch he made of the scene in 1845, entitled: "The Hudson Valley from Red Hill" [Olana collection, OL.1980.1333]. Church kept the sketch throughout his lifetime.
7. Theodore Cole (hereafter cited as TC), diary entry, 3/31/1860 (Vedder Memorial Library, Greene County Historical Society [hereafter cited as VML]).
8. For Frederic Church's history with Theodore Cole, see: Raymond Beecher, "Went Over the River to Churches Place," unpublished manuscript (VML).
9. TC, diary entry, 2/28/1860 (VML).
10. Ibid., 4/2/1860 (VML).
11. Ibid., 9/21/1860 (VML).
12. Letter: FEC to A.C. Goodman, 8/20/1860 (David Huntington Archive at Olana State Historic Site [hereafter cited as DHA]). While the term "farmhouse" was initially used, "cottage" was also found in some early correspondence, e.g., letter: FEC to Joseph Church (hereafter cited as JC), 4/15/1864 (DHA). The design of the original cottage has been tentatively attributed to Richard Morris Hunt (1828-95), the important American architect. Church knew Hunt and had known links with his office. However, the evidence directly linking Hunt to the cottage design is thin. (There is a 1861 bill for \$125 from Hunt's office, and a perspective drawing that is not believed to have been by either Church or Hunt). The payment may have been for Hunt office services, possibly working on ideas conceived by Frederic Church, who could have been the primary author of the cottage design. In any event, Cosy Cottage is best understood within the long tradition of the cottage ornée, established by numerous English designers from the 1790s (see: Robert M. Toole, "Historic Landscape Report: Sunnyside, The Home of Washington Irving," Historic Hudson Valley, 1995, p. 14, f.n. #32).
13. The first recorded use of the name "Cosy Cottage" was in a letter: Isabel Carnes Church (hereafter cited as ICC) to Mrs. Erastus Dow Palmer, not dated, c. 6/7/1870 (McKinney Library, Albany Institute of History and Art [hereafter cited as AIHA]). In 1872 the name was used by one of Church's relatives, Henry Q. Mack, diary entry, 10/30/1872 and 11/4/1872 (VML).
14. Mack, diary entry, 11/4/1872 (VML).
15. Letter: FEC to JC, 4/15/1861; bill: H.P. Skinner (Hudson, NY) to FEC (for carpet), 3/20/1861; and bill: W. & J. Sloane (New York City) to FEC (for carpet), 5/11/1861 (DHA).
16. In addition to Theodore Cole's oversight, the salaried farmers (who lived in the original farmhouse located southeast from Cosy Cottage) handled the rigorous aspects of the farm work, including the plowing, cultivation of crops, harvesting, and barn operations. The Churches seemed to be directly involved in the kitchen garden, orchards, and the flower garden developed close to Cosy Cottage, in addition to ornamental landscape improvements. No separate gardener is mentioned in these early years. From the documentation, Frederic Church took responsibility for landscape design decisions, but it seems Isabel was influential in her husband's work.
17. TC, diary entry, 4/25/1861 (VML).
18. Letter: FEC to JC, 5/13/1864 (DHA).
19. Ibid.
20. Letter: Ramon Paez to FEC, 9/15/1862 [DHA].
21. CCD, Book 20, page 409 (dated 3/18/1864). This parcel had been owned for about a year by a friend of Frederic Church's, Dr. George W. Bethune. Church had encouraged Bethune to build

a house on the site but its precipitous slopes made such development difficult. Bethune died in 1862 and thereafter Church added the property to his adjacent acres.

- 22. Letter: FEC to JC, 5/13/1864 [DHA]. Previous to this, Church had access from the public road, but for him it was unsuitable because the entry was located beside a small house and came to Cosy Cottage over an un-dramatic service route.
- 23. Ibid.
- 24. Letter: TC to FEC, 9/12/1868 [DHA].
- 25. Letter: FEC to JC, 4/15/1864 [DHA].
- 26. Ibid. Theodore Cole's diary entries and account notations confirm these activities. For example, 300 maple trees, costing \$24, were purchased on April 7, 1864 [VML].
- 27. Letter: FEC to JC, 5/13/1864 [DHA].
- 28. TC, diary entry, 6/7/1865 [VML].
- 29. Letter: FEC to TC, 7/28/1865 [DHA].
- 30. Letter: FEC to William H. Osborn (hereafter cited as WHO), 1/1/1866 [DHA]. The letter describes the winter scenery and is headed: "Siberia."
- 31. Charles L. Fisher, "Archaeological Discovery of Frederic Church's First Studio at Olana State Historic Site, Columbia Co., N.Y.," OPRHP, Bureau of Historic Sites, 2/1994 [OSHS]. The Studio was about 24 feet x 24 feet, with a covered porch on the west side.
- 32. Letter: FEC to WHO, 3/26/1867 [DHA].
- 33. Ibid., 6/13/1867 [DHA].
- 34. Ibid., 10/25/1867 [DHA].
- 35. Ibid.
- 36. Ibid. At a later date, this building is thought to have been converted into a garden shed or tool shed.
- 37. Letter: FEC to WHO, 6/13/1867 [DHA].
- 38. Ibid., 3/26/1867 [DHA].
- 39. Gerald L. Carr, *Frederic Edwin Church: Catalogue Raisonné of Works of Art at Olana State Historic Site*, 2 vols. New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- 40. Letter: FEC to Erastus Dow Palmer (hereafter cited as EDP), 10/22/1867 [AIHA].
- 41. CCD, Book 30, page 429 (dated: 10/28/1867).
- 42. CCD, Book 32, page 125 (dated: 3/31/1868).
- 43. Letter: FEC to WHO, 10/25/1867 [DHA].
- 44. Ibid.
- 45. Letter: John Gaul, Jr. to JC, 3/25/1868 [DHA].
- 46. For detailed background on the house design and construction, as well as other aspects of Olana's history, see: James A. Ryan, *Frederic Church's Olana: Architecture and Landscape As Art* (Hudson, NY: The Olana Partnership), 2001.
- 47. Letter: TC to FEC, 11/7/1868 [DHA].
- 48. Letter: TC to FEC, 11/29/1868 [DHA].
- 49. Letter: TC to FEC, 7/14/1868 [DHA].
- 50. Letter: TC to FEC, 9/12/1868 [DHA].
- 51. The \$1,000 farm income and expenses can be compared with Frederic Church's artistic earnings in 1867 which totaled \$18,620 - letter: J. Gaul, Jr. to JC, 5/26/1868 [DHA].
- 52. Letter: FEC to WHO, 11/30/1868 and 1/1/1869 [DHA].

53. Letter: Edward A. Weeks (hereafter cited as EAW) to FEC, 2/18/1869 [DHA].
54. Letter, FEC to EDP, 7/7/1869 [AIHA].
55. Letter: FEC to EAW, 10/13/1869 [DHA].
56. Letter: FEC to WHO, 8/31/1869 [DHA].
57. Letter: FEC to EAW, 10/13/1869 [DHA].
58. Letter: FEC to EDP, 9/22/1869 [AIHA].
59. Ibid.
60. Letter: FEC to Mr. Austin, 9/16/1869 [DHA].
61. Letter: FEC to A.C. Goodman, 7/21/1871 [DHA].
62. The comparison between Church's farm in 1870 and the previous owner in 1855 is based on census data, see: Kristin L. Gibbons, "Census Data Relating to Olana State Historic Site," OPRHP, Bureau of Historic Sites, 4/1996 [OSHS].
63. Letter: FEC to EDP, 5/3/1871 [AIHA].
64. Letter: TC to FEC, 5/24/1868 [DHA].
65. Only partial documentation survives to detail the seed and plant orders. Church consistently ordered vegetable and flower seeds from Peter Henderson & Co. of New Jersey. The earliest receipt to survive is dated 8/1878, while the last is from 11/1891. Church also ordered seeds from Jas M. Thorburn & Co. of New York City (receipt dated 2/19/1888), and Price & Reed of Albany, NY (receipts dated 8/1/1888, 3/31/1890, and 5/18/1891). Flower and vegetable seeds were also purchased locally, as for example from Rice Brothers, Hudson, NY (receipts dated 6/2/1884 and 5/1885) [DHA].
66. Letter: TC to FEC, 11/7/1868 [DHA].
67. TC, diary entry, 5/20/1870 [VML].
68. Letter: FEC to EAW, 10/13/1869 [DHA].
69. Letter: Susan Hale to Edward Hale, 11/15/1903 [University of Rhode Island, Special Collections].
70. F.N. Zabriskie, "'Old Colony Papers,' An Artist's Castle and Our Ride Thereto" (*The Christian Intelligencer*, 9/10/1884), p. 2.
71. Ibid.
72. "Homes of America V," *The Art Journal* (New York edition, August 1876) p. 248.
73. Letter: FEC to A.C. Goodman, 7/21/1871 [DHA]. Church later claimed: "Yes, I can say, as the good woman did about her mock turtle soup, I made it out of my own head," quoted in Frank J. Bonnelle, *The Boston Sunday Harald*, 9/7/1890.
74. "The Kaatskills, Their Attractions Enthusiastically Set Forth," unidentified magazine/newspaper article, c. 1871 [VML].
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid. The donkey rides are described by Frederic Church—letter: FEC to WHO, 7/22/1871 [Princeton University Library].
77. *The Catskill Examiner*, 8/31/1872.
78. Letter: FEC to EDP, 8/1/1880 [AIHA].
79. Letter: FEC to WHO, 7/22/1871 [Princeton University Library].
80. Zabriskie, p. 2.
81. "Homes of America, V" (1876), 248.
82. Letter: FEC to Amelia Edwards, 9/2/1877 [Somerville College Library, Oxford, England].
83. "Homes of America V," p. 248.

84. H.W. French, *Art and Artists in Connecticut* (Boston, MA: Lee and Shepard, 1879), p. 131.
85. Bill/Receipt: George Herd to FEC, 12/6/1878 [DHA].
86. Letter: FEC to EDP, 5/19/1879 [AIHA]. There is no evidence that a “birch canoe” was kept at the lake.
87. Ibid., 6/22/1875.
88. CCD, Book 59, page 372 (dated: 5/1/1877).
89. Letter: Alfred L. Edwards to FEC, 2/12/1880 [DHA]; and FEC to EDP, 8/1/1880 [AIHA]. The name, Olana, refers to a specific place identified by the 2nd-century geographer Strabo, as an “elevated stronghold overlooking a fertile river valley in ancient Persia” - Gerald Carr, “What’s in a Name: The Genesis of Frederic Church’s Olana,” unpublished manuscript, 1988, p. 9 [Olana].
90. Emma Osgood Carnes (hereafter cited as EC), miscellaneous diary entries [DHA].
91. Letter: Susan Hale to Lucretia P. Hale, 6/29/1884, in, Caroline P. Atkinson, ed. Letters of Susan Hale (Boston MA and New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2nd ed., 1933), p. 140.
92. Ibid., 7/6/1884, Atkinson, p. 142.
93. Letter: FEC to EDP, 10/18/1884 [AIHA].
94. EC, diary entry, 7/3/1884 [DHA].
95. Ibid., 8/23/1884 and 8/31/1884 [DHA]. The Bethune Road was built in the 1860s to provide access up the steep western slope but was seldom used after the construction of the North and South Roads.
96. Ibid., 9/4/1884 [DHA].
97. This fence line was constructed using barbed wire fitted to wood posts and was shown on the 1886 Plan of Olana.
98. Letter: FEC to EDP, 10/18/1884 [AIHA].
99. EC, diary entry, 9/7/1885 [DHA].
100. Letter: FEC to EDP, 7/8/1885 [AIHA].
101. Ibid., 6/20/1886 [AIHA].
102. Ibid.
103. Bill: R.W. Allen to ICC, 1/1/1888 (for purchases on October 13, 1887); also, R.W. Allen to ICC, 7/18/1888 [DHA]. Thirty plants were included on the January 1, 1888, invoice. No plant names were identified on the first invoice. The July 1888 invoice was for 200 plants and included the following identifications: pansies, chrysanthemum, sweet alyssum, calceolaria, centauria, calendula, heliotrope, vinca, coleus, echeveria, salvia, aster, anthemis, lobelia, begonia, geranium and rose geranium, verbena, and lantana. Vines included cobeia, maurandia, nasturtium, and clematis. The garden is shown in eight separate historic photographs. While some individual plants can be identified, the photographs are more helpful at illustrating the general size, massing, and mix of plantings during, or after, Church’s lifetime.
104. Ink, pencil, and water color on paper (22-1/8" x 36-1/4") [OL.1984.39] (Figure 3). Frederic Joseph Church was at the time a college student studying land surveying. Despite a proclaimed scale of “160 feet to an in[ch],” the plan is not an accurate measured survey.
105. EC, diary entry, 9/9/1884 [DHA]
106. The accuracy of Frederic Joseph Church’s plan presents interpretive issues. For example, the layout of roads is clear from the site’s existing conditions, so that the inaccuracies of the drive layout shown on the plan are not a difficulty. That the plan shows these roads as existing (or not) in 1886 is very helpful. The buildings, while misshapen, can be interpreted, while a symbol for plowed ground (a tan color), provides unique information for which there is no other source. Still, some important landscape components, for example the number of individual trees shown in otherwise open turf area, are not thought to be accurate representations.

107. Frank J. Bonnelle, *The Boston Sunday Herald*, 9/7/1890.
108. "Mr. Church Dies," undated (1900), unidentified newspaper article [DHA].
109. The Office of R.M. Toole, Landscape Architect, "Historic Landscape Report," The Olana Partnership and New York State, Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, 1996. This article is based on this comprehensive study.
110. For background on A.J. Downing (1815-1852), see: David Schuyler, *Apostle of Taste: Andrew Jackson Downing, 1815-1852* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); and George B. Tatum, "Introduction: The Downing Decade (1841-1852)," and "Nature's Gardener," in George B. Tatum and Elizabeth Blair MacDougall, eds. *Prophet with Honor* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1989), pp. 1-42 and 43-80.
111. For background on the English landscape garden, see: John Dixon Hunt and Peter Willis, eds. *The Genius of the Place, The English Landscape Garden, 1620-1820* (Cambridge MA: M.I.T. Press, 1990); and David Jacques, *Georgian Gardens, The Reign of Nature* (Portland, OR: Timber Press, 1984).
112. William Shenstone, *Unconnected Thoughts on Gardening*, 1764.
113. For an excellent review of landscape design in the Federal period, see: Therese O'Malley, "Landscape Gardening in the early National Period," in Edward J. Nygren, *Views and Visions, American Landscapes Before 1830* (Washington, DC: The Corcoran Gallery of Art), 1986, pp. 133-159.
114. Anonymous author, "Thoughts of a Hermit . . ." Port Folio, Vol. 6 (July 1815), as quoted in Nygren, *Views and Visions*, p. 25.
115. Andrew Jackson Downing, *Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening Adapted to North America* (hereafter cited as *Landscape Gardening*) (New York, NY: George P. Putnam, 5th ed., 1854), pp. 61-84. Downing addressed the Picturesque design mode in Section II "Beauties and Principles of the Art" (the table of contents reads: "Beauties of Landscape Gardening"). Today, the word "picturesque" has come to have a broad and imprecise meaning. For this reason, the capitalized version used here is given a precise meaning, as defined by Downing and described in this paper as related to the 19th-century art of landscape gardening in the Hudson River Valley.
116. While clearly related, the picturesque aesthetic encompassed perception of natural landscapes and outdoor scenery, a different concern than is implied by the artifice of Picturesque landscape gardening as it was narrowly defined in the writings of A.J. Downing.
117. Downing, *Landscape Gardening*, 2nd ed. (1844), p. 55, f.n. Downing used illustrations to depict the differences between the "Picturesque" and "Beautiful" (Figure 9).
118. Letter: Thomas Cole to Miss Maria Cooke, not dated [October 1841], as quoted in Noble, *The Life and Works of Thomas Cole* (1853), 230.
119. Thomas Cole, "Essay on American Scenery," *The American Monthly Magazine*, New Series I (January 1836), p. 6.
120. Thomas Cole, diary entry, 7/6/1835, as quoted in Noble, 148.
121. Downing, *Landscape Gardening*, 2nd ed. (1844), p. 59. Downing said the Picturesque was in ascendancy "within the last five years," i.e., c. 1839.
122. Thomas Cole, "Lecture on Art," in, Marshall Tymn, ed., *The Collected Essays and Prose Sketches of Thomas Cole* (St. Paul, MN: John Colet Press, 1980), p. 108.
123. Linda S. Ferber, "Determined Realists": The American Pre-Raphaelites and the Association for the Advancement of Truth in Art," in *The New Path* (Brooklyn, NY: Brooklyn Museum), 1985, p. 16.
124. Letter: FEC to EDP, 10/18/1884 [AIHA].
125. Andrew Jackson Downing, *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*, 4th ed., 1849, p. 72.